

*July 19 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001*

Statement on House of Representatives Action on the Faith-Based and  
Community Initiative  
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Back at home, Congress has taken an important step toward building stronger and more caring communities.

In a victory for progress and compassion, the House has acted to expand charitable giving, to increase the help available to poor Americans, and to end discrimination against churches, synagogues, and charities that provide social services. Our Faith-Based and Community Initiative levels the playing field so that all people and groups with a heart to serve have the chance to serve.

I commend Members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats, and especially thank Congressmen J.C. Watts and Tony Hall for working together in a bipartisan way to enact this plan.

I also want to thank countless supporters from across America who have taken this initiative to heart. From small religious congregations to large foundations and faith-based charities, the real support for our work has come from people and groups that put first the injunction to love and serve a neighbor in need. With their help, with the vote in Congress, and with support from major organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors, momentum is on our side. Now the Senate must act, and I urge the Senate to join us to provide help and hope to those who so urgently need it.

This fall, Members of the Senate can provide practical help to community organizations fighting for safer streets and a brighter future for our children.

These groups work to prevent crime and drug abuse, provide help to the elderly, feed the hungry, care for abused women and children, shelter the homeless, and build hope in communities where hope is

too often not a resident. We must all take their side. The Senate must take their side.

I've talked with Senator Daschle about the critical importance of this legislation, and I urge him to bring it up promptly so we can get to work helping the people who need our help most.

Back in January, Senators Rick Santorum and Joe Lieberman stood with me when our Faith-Based and Community Initiative was launched. I look forward to working with them, so we can stand together again when this bill is signed into law.

One of the great goals of my administration is to rally America's armies of compassion and restore a spirit of caring, citizenship, and community. One of the things that makes America unique is the loving spirit of the many people in our great country who want to help those in need.

Government should encourage them, and if these good people are acting based on the calling of their faith, we should respect and welcome them and never stand in their way.

Churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples are in every neighborhood in America, and we can never have a Government bureaucracy big enough to extend a hand to every child who needs a mentor, to every adult who needs a friend, to every senior citizen who needs a hot meal and a human touch.

No one can love a neighbor as well as a loving neighbor, and we must unleash good people of faith and works in every community in our country. By doing so, we can extend the hope and the promise and the opportunity that is at the heart of the American Dream to the heart of every child in America.

I commend the United States House and urge the United States Senate to act quickly to unleash this enormous force for good.